1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

plateau from Antagarh tahsil. The northern half of this north-eastern plateau is Kondagaon tahsil, and the southern Jagdalpur. The height of the plateau varies from 2,500 or 2,400 feet at its northern and southern edges to about 1,800 feet near Jagdalpur. It is a region of evergreen forests, with the beautiful sal (*Shorea robusta*) as its characteristic tree. The temperature seldom exceeds 104° in the summer, and at Jagdalpur descends to 40° in the winter, while hoar frosts are not uncommon in the forests. Kondagaon tahsil is under-developed and jungly, much of it and Antagarh having been comparatively recently settled by Gond immigrants from Chhattisgarh. Jagdalpur, on the other hand, has miles of excellent rice cultivation in its extensive open plains, and is the only heavily populated part of the State, except adjacent parts of Dantewara. On its south-eastern and southern edges, however, it has hilly country heavily forested or inhabited by primitive Parjas and Bison-horn Marias.

The north-west corner of the State is the Antagarh tahsil. The north of this is a continuation of the Chhattisgarh-Kanker plain 800 or 900 feet above sea-level, bounded on the west and north by the Chanda and Drug districts of the Central Provinces and by Kanker State. This plain, the second main natural division of Bastar, is reached from Keskal and north Kondagaon through the Amabera *pargana*, which, though on the 2,000 feet plateau, is in Antagarh, by a forest road descending the steep Matlaghat by a recently re-aligned and easily-graded descent. The main road from Jagdalpur and Kondagaon through Antagarh to Rajnandgaon rail-head enters the tahsil in the Benur *pargana* on the 2,000 feet plateau and descends 200 or 300 feet to Narainpur which, with the adjacent *parganas* of Kurangal, Dugal, Baragaon, Ghat Jhorian and Bare Jhorian, as well as Benur and the lowland or 'Kalpatti' villages of Chhote Dongar *pargana*, are an intermediate stage between the true 2,000 feet plateau and the plain of north Antagarh. The inhabitants are mostly what were called by Glasfurd and other early writers Jhorias, in appearance scarcely distinguishable from the Marias of the Abujhmar hills, with similar dancing dress, and customs similar, but considerably modified by sojourn in the lowlands and contact with other tribes. From Narainpur a forest road runs westward along the Nei Bherat valley to Sonpur, with an extension thence to Paralkot and Maroda, where it meets another forest road that comes westward from Taroki on the Narainpur-Antagarh road across the north Antagarh plain. The Sonpur, Paralkot and Paralkot-Kalpatti *parganas* are really lowland *parganas* in the middle of highland Maria *parganas*, and the two latter belong properly speaking to the north Antagarh plain. The

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

133 Madras if it had been reasonably managed. The few 'Doria' villages are the most miserable in Bastar.

The third sub-division is the Kolab-Sabari valley from the southern slopes of the hills at the edge of the 2,000 feet plateau and the Dantewara valley plateau to the border of the Bhadrachalam taluq of Madras on the south. The northern portion of this, the Sukma zamindari, is a punchbowl ringed by the high edges of the Jagdalpur and Dantewara plateaux from Tulsidongri in the north-east counter-clockwise to a point in the south-west of the zamindari where the foot-hills of the Gogonda-Tikanpalli hills approach the Kolab-Sabari near Chikpalli; the hills are continued across the river and the Bastar border still counter-clockwise towards Malkangiri, and thence back to Tulsidongri. There are two small detached portions of Jagdalpur tahsil in the north of the zamindari, around Kukanar and the lower waters of the Thakawara and Kumakoleng rivers respectively. South of Sukma zamindari the valley opens out again to form the main block of Konta tahsil, including the former Bhiji zamindari, the level of which falls nearly to 250 feet above the sea by Konta at its south-east corner; here the Bastar portion of the valley is very narrow, as nearly all the south of Konta tahsil is occupied by the ranges of the Golapalli mountains which at one point reach a height of more than 2,800 feet.

132 In contrast with north Bastar, with its evergreen moist forests, cool climate, abundant water-supply and often thick population,
133 south Sukma, almost all Konta, the Pamer-Kotapalli zamindari
● 137 and much of south Bijapur are hot dry regions of deciduous forests, deficient water and sparse population. The rivers are short stony torrents rushing down in the monsoon to the adjacent Godavari, Talper or Kolab-Sabari, and drying up often before January. Teak is the characteristic timber tree.

135 There will be found in Appendix I a statement of the areas and populations of the six tahsils and four zamindaris into which modern
162 Bastar is divided. Each of these administrative units is called after the name of its headquarters; except Jagdalpur with a (1931) population of 10,128, the other headquarters are only villages, and not always large villages; in 1931, of the 2,442 villages in Bastar only five had populations between 2,000 and 2,500, and forty-two populations between 1,000 and 2,000.

634 Frequent mention was made in this chapter of the smaller '*pargana*' unit. The first use that I can find of this word is in Appendix IX of Glasfurd's 1862 report, in which, of the forty-three non-zamindari sub-divisions of Bastar, seventeen are called *parganas* and twenty-six *garhs*. In Elliot's 1855 report the names are given of forty-eight *garhs* and nine taluqs into which the non-zamindari

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

712 has now disappeared. The gates of the fort are lying on the top, and there is a stone platform, on which are images of horses and elephants sacred to the presiding deity, Thakur Deo. Previous to the Gond conquest Surjagarh was a noted Mana fortress, and about the end of the 17th century was occupied by two famous chieftains, Sādho Vuria and Mula Vuria, who rebelled against the Chanda king, Ram Shah, and, secure in their strong fortresses, harried the low lands with impunity. At length Ram Shah granted the tract to a relative named Kokshah, who after some years of desultory warfare stormed the hill and put the insurgent leaders to the sword. Kokshah then made Surjagarh his citadel, and under its shadow his descendants, the present Ahiri family, have extended their possession, east and west, and south and north, until nearly 3,000 miles of country own them masters. The scenery of these hills is very wild, and the black glittering mass of Surjagarh, streaked here and there with patches of bright green and red, stands out grandly against the sky. The upper cliffs have a beautiful shrub, with dark green leaves and clusters of lovely blue flowers.'

There were still 38,650 Manas in Chanda district in 1931, and Thakur Deo on the summit of Surjagarh remains their tutelary deity. Also named after them is the fortress of Manikgarh in the Rajura taluq of Adilabad district. Russell and Hiralal[1] speak of them as a Dravidian caste of cultivators and labourers, possibly an offshoot of the Gonds, and associated in the popular mind with Gonds and Gowaris. They are now completely Hinduized, and have generally adopted Maratha customs. The Thakur Deo platform on the Surjagarh summit had a wealth of clay images, mostly horses, in type precisely similar to the horse images associated with Aiyyenar in South India.

● 137 If you stand on the summit, in whatever direction you look, north, south, east or west, all the Sironcha and Garchiroli tahsils and the Abujhmar Mountains of Bastar still seem to be one vast forest, with only occasional small yellow patches indicating village sites and cultivation. Speaking of the Chanda Marias' shifting cultivation 241 (*podu*) Lucie-Smith wrote in 1869[2] :—

'For the vast wilderness east of the Wyngunga it is the very best that could be devised. By it, year by year, more and more land is cleared of forest and made ready for the plough, and thus every Maria village has around it a very much larger area of open ground than would be the case if the plough only were used. No one who has passed through these great wastes, shut in by lofty trees and dense masses of bamboo, and seeing, sometimes for days, not a trace of human habitation, can fail to rejoice at the work fire and axe are doing. It is of course important to prevent the destruction of forest containing valuable timber, and to arrange for reserves of jungle wood, grass and bamboos near the cultivated tracts, but, this done, *dahi* cultivation should be encouraged. It would be idle to speculate upon the changes in temperature and in rainfall the clearance of the forests would entail, for even if the population increase to the full, and coal mines, railways and river navigation bring all the prosperity we hope they will, yet in all human probability the youngest teak seedling now springing into life will have grown old and withered to dust before the eastern wilderness shall have sensibly decreased.'

[1] Vol IV, p. 172, *et seq.*
[2] Loc. cit. para. 232.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

XII. The Sago-Palm

273 Another very popular drink is the juice of the sago-palm, and since the
137 Muria have developed many legends round it I will give the subject a section of its own.[1]

The sago-palm (*Caryota urens*, Linn.), which is known as *gorga marra* in Gondi and as *salpi rukh* in Halbi, is widely distributed over the greater part of the State. It is an erect monoecious tree, with axillary spadices, which sometimes grows to the height of sixty or eighty feet. Its long bipinnate leaves with their fish-tail ends are sometimes twenty feet long. The aboriginals, whether Hill Maria, Bison-horn Maria or Muria,[2] regard the trees primarily as a source of liquor, though they use the inner tissues of the stem and the wood for other purposes. The popularity of the tree is shown in the riddle,
[524] 'Above sits the parrot, below is the thrashing-floor', suggesting that under the beautiful sago-palm a great crowd of people gather, and in such songs as *'Waliya wāto gorga ale māmāle*—O uncle, the sago-palms are everywhere you go'. Unlike mahua spirit, however, salphi juice is not usually used in worship or on other ceremonial occasions.[3] It is rather a drink for one's private and friendly hours, though it may often supplement a failing supply of mahua at a marriage or funeral.

824 As always, legends and stories gather about anything that is intimately
538 connected with the life of the people. There are several different accounts of the origin of the sago-palm, but all agree in connecting it with youth and gaiety. It came into being when maidens danced together or when boys pursued their loves. In the north of the State the most common legend traces its origin to an expedition of boys and girls from the house of Bhagavan, which came down to earth to dance and bathe.[4] One such party came to Chikhli village on the northernmost plateau of the State and after bathing, the girls left behind the cowrie ornaments of their hair. These ornaments are very popular among the motiari; sometimes a mass of cowries covers the whole of the back of their heads. When the girls found they had lost their ornaments they were angry and cursed the cowries saying, 'Now turn into sago-palms and we will always live with you and will never lose you again.' For this reason it is said that the cowrie is the tuft of feathers that fell from Lingo's turban. Yet again it is said that the tree was a feather stuck in the hair of a motiari which fell off as she was going to Penjori village to dance the Diwali dances, and turned into a tree when she got angry with it. But everywhere it is agreed that the tree springs up in all those places where the girls either from the house of Bhagavan or from some earthly ghotul used to go to dance. In the forests above the Raughat and all along the northern plateau there are a great many of these trees and these were the very parts where the girls went for their dancing in the dawn of the world.

There are, however, some other versions of the origin of the palm. In Mule village the Muria say that when the seven salphi maidens (Gorga Kanyang) were born they only had one placenta between them. This was cut off and

[1] For a fuller account see my article 'The Sago-Palm in Bastar State', *JRAS. Bom.*, Vol. XVIII (N.S. 1942), pp. 69–78.

[2] Grigson is not quite correct in saying that Hill and Bison-horn Maria 'almost alone in Bastar use salphi liquor'.—Grigson, op. cit., p. 224. The Muria of the north are among the most enthusiastic drinkers of salphi juice in the whole State.

[3] According to Thurston, the fermented juice is used ceremonially at marriages and festivals by the Poroja and Savara.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. VI, pp. 216, 322.

[4] The seven heavenly damsels who came down to dance and bathe on earth is a common motif in Indian folk-tales. See Thurston, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 100.